

# Essay Topics for *Dead Poets Society* and Transcendentalism

**Directions:** Select one of the responses below and, in a minimum 4 paragraph response, answer completely using support from both the film and at least 2 examples from external sources, esp. the Transcendentalists.

## 1. Choices

All of us are called upon to make choices, most of which are not easy. Sometimes a choice sets into motion a series of events we had not counted on. This is true of characters in literature as well.

Choose a character who has made important choices that reflect a new way of thinking or that have consequences. In a multi-paragraph essay, do the following:

- a. Explain what the choice or series of related choices is.
- b. Describe what lead up to the choice, for example, what events, what changes in behavior or outlook on life. Did another person have any influence on the decision?
- c. Evaluate the choice(s): was it a good one? (Think about the short and long term) Was it all the character could do given his inexperience in life?

## 2. Character Relationships

We all have that special person in our own lives, whether it be parent or best friend—someone we all trust and confide in. The characters in *DPS* are no different. However, sometimes relationships fall apart, while others seem to grow stronger. What is that thing that binds or destroys a relationship? In a multi-paragraph essay, do the following:

- a. Describe one of the following relationships between
  - ✓ The boys and their families
  - ✓ The boys and the school
  - ✓ The boys and Mr. Keating
  - ✓ Between the boys themselves
- b. How do these relationships develop? Or dissolve?

## 3. Symbolism

Several things in the film achieve a status of symbols. Some of these are Todd's desk set, Neil's crown, the seasons (winter, summer), standing on the table, poetry - and a number of others. In a multi-paragraph essay, do the following:

- a. Use one of the above mentioned or find and describe something that you consider a symbol.
- b. Describe how it works together with the rest of the film. What does the symbol illustrate?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Mod: \_\_\_\_\_  
Plan for *Dead Poets Society* and Transcendentalism Paper

**Requirements:**

At Least 4 paragraphs (Intro, Body 1, Body 2, Conclusion)

Include events from film

Include at least 2 quotations of support from Transcendentalist believer (Thoreau, Emerson, Dickinson, Whitman)

Topic Chosen: \_\_\_\_\_

Intro Paragraph:

Lead Idea –

Thesis statement –

Body Paragraph 1: Topic - \_\_\_\_\_

Even from the film:

Comment: (ICE)

Quotation from Transcendentalist:

Citation: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: (ICE)

Body Paragraph 2: Topic - \_\_\_\_\_

Even from the film:

Comment: (ICE)

Quotation from Transcendentalist:

Citation: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: (ICE)

Conclusion:

Restate Thesis:

Connection back to lead: